

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. An electronic system for monitoring and analyzing at least one signal, comprising:
a first input that receives at least one reference signal to be monitored;
a first processor that creates an abstract of each reference signal input to said first processor through said first input;
a second input that receives at least one query signal to be analyzed;
a second processor that creates an abstract of each query signal;
a reference database that stores abstracts of each at least one reference signal;
a comparing device that compares an abstract of said at least one query signal to the abstracts stored in the reference database to determine if the abstract of said at least one query signal matches any of the stored abstracts; and
a device that permits submission of reference signal abstracts to the reference database.
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2. The system of claim 1, wherein the device that permits submission of reference signal abstracts provides a database rights and restriction report, the database rights and restriction report comprising the attendant rights and restrictions associated with any stored abstract associated with a positive result.
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3. The system of claim 1, wherein the reference database is available to the public.
4. The system of claim 1, wherein access to the reference database is limited to at least one of specific members of the public and specific companies.
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5. The system of claim 1, wherein the database rights and restrictions report is used to determine pricing.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the database rights and restrictions report is used to determine suitable content members for a searchable index of content.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the database rights and restrictions report is used to
5 associate content with external value-adding components created by a rightsholder.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein said second input is remotely coupled to the system.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein said second processor is remotely coupled to the system.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the system transmits the criteria that are being used by the
10 first processor to the second processor.

11. The system of claim 1, further comprising:

15 a storage medium coupled to said first input, the storage medium storing each of said at least one reference signals to be monitored; and

a controller that compares an abstract for each reference signal being input for the first time to be compared to all previously stored abstracts in the reference database, such that in the event that the comparing device determines that it cannot distinguish between the abstract of a
20 reference signal being input for the first time from a previously stored abstract in the reference database, the controller adjusts the criteria being used by the processor and re-generates the reference database, by re-processing each reference signal stored on the storage medium to create new abstracts and storing said new abstracts in the reference database.

25 12. The system of claim 1, wherein the reference database acts as a certification authority.

13. A electronic system for monitoring and analyzing a plurality of signals, comprising:

a first input for receiving a plurality of reference signals to be monitored;
a first processor for creating a plurality of abstracts corresponding to the plurality of reference signals;
a reference database for storing the reference signal abstracts;
5 a second input for receiving a query signal to be analyzed;
a second processor for creating an abstract of the query signal;
a comparing device that compares the query signal abstract to the reference signal abstracts and determines if the query signal abstract matches at least one of the reference signal abstracts; and
10 a means for linking the query signal abstract to the reference signal corresponding to the matching reference signal abstract.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the linking is dependent on predetermined access rules.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein the linking is differentiated by at least one of signal quality, value adding components, URL, geographic parameter, time-based parameter, payment terms and conditions, user dependent identification, and combinations thereof.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein the abstract represents a set of related abstracts for substantially the same signal.

17. The system of claim 13, wherein the abstract is distributed to a plurality of locations to optimize linking of abstracts with said abstract's representative signal.

18. The system of claim 13, wherein the means for linking the query signal abstract to the reference signal corresponding to the matching reference signal abstract is bidirectional.

19. The system of claim 18, wherein the linking is performed by a device with the functionality to link electronically with the abstract.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein the bidirectional linking enables adjustments based on at least one of a number of access requests, types of signal versions requested, identification information of access devices, payment, location, and combinations thereof.

21. The system of claim 13, wherein the electronic system is accessible over at least one of a public network and a private network.

22. The system of claim 13, further comprising:
a means for a user to monitor the comparison device.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein the means for a user to monitor the comparison device is part of a web browser.

24. The system of claim 22, wherein the means for a user to monitor the comparison device is part of at least one of a caching function and a filtering function.

25. The system of claim 23, further comprising:
a means for non-owners of the reference database to submit reference signal abstracts to the reference database.

26. The system of claim 13, wherein the reference database acts as a certification authority.

27. The system of claim 13, further comprising:
a device for embedding each reference signal with its corresponding reference signal

abstract.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the reference signal abstract is hashed before it is embedded.

29. The system of claim 27, wherein the reference signal abstract is digitally signed before it is embedded.

30. The system of claim 13, wherein the reference signal corresponding to the matching reference signal abstract is downloadable.

31. The system of claim 30, wherein the reference signal abstract is embedded into the matching reference signal before the reference signal is downloaded.

32. A method for monitoring a signal, comprising:
receiving a reference signal to be monitored;
creating an abstract corresponding to the reference signal;
linking the abstract to at least one signal to be referenced; and
embedding the abstract in the at least one signal to be referenced.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the abstract is held by a certification authority.

34. The method of claim 32, wherein the abstract is embedded with a predetermined key.

35. The method of claim 32, wherein the abstract is hashed before it is embedded.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the hash of the abstract is embedded.

37. The method of claim 35, wherein the abstract is combined with a kind of information selected from the group consisting of an identify of a user, a receipt of a transaction, an identify of a distribution chain, an identify of a device, a predetermined key, and combinations thereof, before the abstract is hashed.

38. The system of claim 32, wherein the abstract is digitally signed before it is embedded.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein the signature of the abstract is embedded.

40. The method of claim 28, wherein the abstract is combined with a kind of information selected from the group consisting of an identify of a user, a receipt of a transaction, an identify of a distribution chain, an identify of a device, a predetermined key, and combinations thereof, before the abstract is digitally signed.

41. A method for controlling the distribution of digital signals, comprising:
creating an abstract for a first digital signal, the first digital signal having an unknown distribution status;
comparing the first digital signal abstract to at least one database of digital signal abstracts, each abstract in the at least one database corresponding to a digital signal having a known distribution status; and
determining the distribution status for the first digital signal based on the comparison.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein the step of determining the distribution status for the first digital signal based on the comparison comprises:

permitting distribution of the first digital signal responsive to the first digital signal abstract not matching one of the digital signature abstracts in the at least one database.

43. The method of claim 41, wherein the step of determining the distribution status for the first digital signal based on the comparison comprises:

5 permitting a link to the first digital signal responsive to the first digital signal abstract not matching one of the digital signature abstracts in the at least one database.

44. The method of claim 41, wherein the step of determining the distribution status for the first digital signal based on the comparison comprises:

10 not permitting distribution of the first digital signal responsive to the first digital signal abstract matching at least one of the digital signature abstracts in the at least one database.

45. The method of claim 41, wherein the step of determining the distribution status for the first digital signal based on the comparison comprises:

15 not permitting a link to the first digital signal responsive to the first digital signal abstract matching at least one of the digital signature abstracts in the at least one database.

46. The method of claim 41, wherein the database is created by at least of a music company, a movie studio, an image archive, and a combination thereof.

20 47. The method of claim 41, wherein the digital signals comprise at least one of digital images, digital audio and digital video.

48. The method of claim 41, wherein the distribution status comprises a copyright status.

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